



Date and Time: Tuesday, July 18, 2023 6:25:00PM PDT

Job Number: 201629973

Document (1)

1. [*Same old climate of fear*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "climate anxiety"

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Sources: National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post)(Canada);
Timeline: Jan 01, 2017 to Jan 01, 2018; All Content Types:
News

Same old climate of fear

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

August 1, 2017 Tuesday

All but Toronto Edition

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Section: FP COMMENT; Pg. FP7

Length: 966 words

Byline: Terence Corcoran, National Post

Body

Not many people remember Al Gore's 2007 book, *The Assault on Reason*. It came out a year after Gore's 2006 movie/book combo, *An Inconvenient Truth*. It's hard to pick up the 2007 effort without a chuckle. As one reviewer put it at the time, *Assault on Reason* is "an aptly titled tome" that accurately reflects its contents. Then there's the book jacket that talks about the "politics of fear" and an opening chapter that warns: "If leaders exploit public fears to herd people in directions they might not otherwise choose, then fear itself can quickly become a self-perpetuating and freewheeling force that drains national will and weakens national character."

Fear, adds Al Gore the great climate fear-monger, can be promulgated using three techniques: repetition, misdirection and making the irregular seem regular. "By using these narrative tools alone, anyone with a loud platform can ratchet up public anxieties and fears, distorting public discourse and reason."

Gore's politics-of-fear warning in 2007 targeted George W. Bush for allegedly resorting to fear of terrorism to invade Iraq. Irony awareness is apparently not part of Gore's personality. And so now he's back, loud and clear on multiple platforms, ratcheting up public anxieties over fossil fuels and climate change.

As if following his own advice, Gore is this summer sweeping across the global media landscape and into public consciousness with a new movie and a new book that are deliberately designed to stir fear in the world's people, if not terror, of a coming climate apocalypse.

The media is gobbling it up, including Canada's specialists in the politics of fear. On the eve of the opening of his new movie, *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power*, and the release of a companion book, Gore sat down last week for a painfully sycophantic interview with Andrew Chang on CBC's *The National*. Typical question: "When you're in the Philippines and you're talking to someone who has been through the ravages of typhoon Haiyan, do you feel the despair? Do you feel the despair from within when you look at the broader fight ahead?" Chang fed Gore a flabby question about Canada that was bound to produce the following: "For me, Justin Trudeau is a breath of fresh air...He and his team were absolutely instrumental in helping us get the Paris agreement." Funny, I thought Stephen Harper set the ground for Canada's participation in the Paris agreement.

In a film promo visit to Australia last month Gore praised South Australia's recently announced deal with Elon Musk to build the world's largest battery. "South Australia is leading the entire world!" exclaimed Gore.

As with many of Gore's exclamations, statements and arguments, he doesn't quite get to the full story. In this case, South Australia needs the battery to rescue the state from renewable-power fiascos that have caused statewide blackouts. South Australia also has the highest electricity rates in the world, is now paying American renewable rent-seeker Elon Musk A\$50 million to build the battery and A\$350 million to provide back-up to its unreliable windmill and solar operations.

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Gore's *An Inconvenient Sequel* film will be released in Canada on Friday, and it will be reviewed by the "FP Comment: At the Movies" team. The book, however, is already available. The book form of *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power* is identical in theme and style - big pictures, not too many words - to *An Inconvenient Truth*, the book part of the 2006 book/movie that helped Gore win a Nobel Prize.

As a propaganda manual, *Sequel* uses a magazine-style format to fill readers with alarming images and claims. There are graphs and pictures of soaring carbon emissions and temperatures, hurricane deaths, famines, rising sea levels, drownings, forest fires, droughts and more. Typical statement: "We are now trapping as much extra heat energy in the atmosphere as would be released by 400,000 Hiroshima-class atomic bombs on the Earth's surface every day." Those few words of text appear over a giant colour photo of an iconic atomic bomb explosion spread across two full pages.

Another two-page photo spread hails Ontario for getting off coal, but makes no mention of the soaring hydro rates undermining the provincial economy. Gore spins wildly optimistic claims about electric cars and renewable energy, which still accounts for a minuscule fraction of world energy needs. As for electric cars, there would be no sales without government subsidies.

In 2006, Gore warned that much of Miami and New York, Calcutta and Bangladesh would be underwater if half of Greenland and Antarctica melted or broke up. Sea levels could rise between 18 and 20 feet. Hasn't happened yet, but Gore is still riding the sea-level wave. In 2006, Gore predicted the World Trade Center site would be under water. In *Sequel*, Gore claims his prediction came true because Hurricane Sandy did cause temporary flooding at the site. Gore also claims that fish are now seen swimming in the streets of Miami as the sea rises, which is technically true but an extremely rare occurrence that experts say has many causes.

About half of *Sequel* is dedicated to offering up political activism as a hope to offset the fear he has spread through the other half. The book jacket describes *Sequel* as a "daring call to action." Write letters, push more press coverage, talk with deniers, talk to children about climate change, eat less meat, buy local organic food, run for office, join an activist group.

In 2006, Gore hailed the Kyoto Protocol as the solution.

Kyoto had been ratified by 132 nations. Then the world abandoned Kyoto. In *Sequel*, Gore looks to the Paris agreement to save the world from the climate anxiety he and others have so systematically created. !@COPYRIGHT=© 2017 Postmedia Network Inc. All rights reserved.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Document-Type: Column

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: NEGATIVE NEWS (90%); AGREEMENTS (89%); MOVIE REVIEWS (89%); NEGATIVE PERSONAL NEWS (79%); CLIMATE CHANGE (78%); TERRORISM & COUNTERTERRORISM (71%); TERRORISM (66%); TYPHOON HAIYAN (50%); people,remember,assault,reason,combo,inconvenient (%)

Industry: MOVIE REVIEWS (89%); ENERGY & UTILITIES (78%); FOSSIL FUELS (50%)

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Person: AL GORE (90%); JUSTIN TRUDEAU (79%); STEPHEN HARPER (79%); GEORGE W BUSH (58%); ELON MUSK (50%)

Geographic: SOUTH AUSTRALIA, AUSTRALIA (92%); CANADA (92%); AUSTRALIA (91%); IRAQ (79%); PHILIPPINES (79%)

Load-Date: August 1, 2017

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